United Nations A/C.5/57/SR.3

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 3rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 30 September 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Sharma ..... (Nepal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 122: Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

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02-61013 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 122: Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Inspection of programme management and administrative practices in the Department for Disarmament Affairs (A/56/817)

1. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the inspection of programme management and administrative practices in the Department for Disarmament Affairs (A/56/817), said that the inspection had been carried out in coordination with the forthcoming triennial follow-up on recommendations of an earlier in-depth evaluation of the Department. In accordance with the initial request of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, emphasis had been placed on examining the regional dimension, which was one of the most promising aspects of the Department's activities. While OIOS had concluded that revitalization of the regional centres was on track, the centres' continuity and long-term viability were far from assured and would require resourcefulness, teamwork and persistence in building up their financial resources so that they could become the dynamic hubs of the Department's regional presence.

2. The inspection had resulted in an overall positive assessment of the Department's programme management and administration. The biggest challenge facing the Department was the disparity between the scale and complexity of its responsibilities and its limited staff resources, which were inadequate for the development of full-fledged research, analysis and policy planning functions. The Department should therefore seek the most efficient use of its own resources, mobilize extrabudgetary resources and pursue partnerships with other actors in order to achieve its programme objectives.

3. The report contained 25 recommendations, whose main thrust with respect to the programme of work was to improve the reliability of planning, make the monitoring of programme delivery more comprehensive, and promote the mainstreaming of disarmament into other substantive areas throughout the Organization. It also recommended that the Department's public outreach through both conventional and electronic means and its presence on the Internet should be strengthened and that specific measures should be taken to promote both internal and system-wide cooperation and coordination. It proposed decisive measures to ensure the long-term viability and effectiveness of the regional centres.

4. The Department had accepted 24 of the recommendations but had taken exception to the recommendation to discontinue its Regional Disarmament Branch, in the belief that it would be better to entrust the Branch with additional responsibilities that might revitalize it. OIOS was not immediately convinced of the viability of the proposed redesign of the Branch's functions and reserved its judgement until such time as the revitalization was actually carried out.

5. He was pleased to report, however, that the Department had taken immediate and decisive steps to implement the recommendations. During the seven-month period since the report had been issued, four recommendations had been fully implemented and five partially implemented, while implementation of 13 others was in progress. Only three of the recommendations had not been acted upon. OIOS would continue to monitor implementation of the recommendations contained in its report.

Inspection of programme management and administrative practices in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (A/56/930)

6. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the inspection of programme management and administrative practices in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (A/56/930), said that the inspection had reaffirmed the reputation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) as a leader in research and analysis, a reliable source of impartial and competent policy advice and training services, and a clearinghouse for good practices for the region. Many of its outputs were considered standard references in specific subject areas in the region and had received worldwide recognition. Its public outreach and practices in the dissemination of outputs and

information were among the best in the United Nations system.

7. Overall, ECLAC had managed to produce more with less. Despite the one-third reduction in its staff, the volume of its implemented outputs had increased by at least 40 per cent during the previous decade. The recent modernization and decentralization process at the Commission had enhanced mid-level management initiative, flexibility and multidisciplinary teamwork. That process, however, should be counterbalanced by an equally effective system of accountability and oversight in order to prevent abuse. OIOS had also observed instances of duplication and lapses in the interaction between divisions and in the collaboration with the subregional headquarters of ECLAC. Management should therefore put in place a viable mechanism of communication and coordination and promote greater transparency in decision-making.

8. He was pleased to report that ECLAC on its own initiative had already submitted its initial report on the implementation of the 19 recommendations which OIOS had made to improve programme planning and performance monitoring, strengthen personal accountability, improve ECLAC-wide coordination and collaboration, and address specific issues of human resources management. A preliminary review of the report confirmed that three recommendations had been fully implemented and three others partially implemented, while implementation of the remainder was in progress. He wished to commend the Executive Secretary of ECLAC on his responsible, prompt and effective follow-up to the recommendations.

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting staff for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (A/57/224)

9. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting staff for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (A/57/224), said that the audit had been conducted at the same time as the Office of Human Resources Management had been preparing the groundwork for implementing the proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253). The audit had found that the average time taken to fill regular vacancies in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations far exceeded the 120 days envisaged in the report of the Secretary-General. OIOS had been informed that the new web-based "Galaxy" system provided the necessary tools to monitor the recruitment process and should help to minimize delays in the filling of future vacancies in the Department. Full implementation of the "Galaxy" system should also result in enhanced transparency and better management of the recruitment process.

10. The audit revealed a number of other shortcomings in the Department's recruiting process. There was no evidence of use during 2001 of the numeric scoring methods for evaluating candidates envisaged in the report of the Secretary-General. There were also inconsistencies in the competencies and skills specified in the vacancy announcements issued by the Office of Human Resources Management for similar posts and posts at the same level in the Department. OIOS was of the view that the integrity of the recruitment process should be maintained by fully adhering to the eligibility requirements specified in vacancy announcements.

11. While the geographical distribution and gender balance of successful candidates were generally equitable and balanced, further improvements could be made when recruiting candidates for the additional posts that had been approved by the General Assembly in February 2002.

12. The five recommendations that had been made as a result of the audit had been accepted by the Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which had already begun to implement them.

Post-implementation review of the Integrated Management Information System at United Nations Headquarters (A/56/879)

13. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the post-implementation review of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) at United Nations Headquarters (A/56/879), said that IMIS, the Organization's principal electronic data-processing system, was now in use at Headquarters in New York and at seven other duty stations. The report contained the findings of an audit conducted at Headquarters during 2001 to assess the management of the IMIS

project as well as the Organization's capacity to enhance, maintain and support IMIS in-house and evaluated the Organization's commitment to ensuring that the technical architecture was upgraded to remain in line with current industry standards. The audit also reviewed the adequacy and effectiveness of the security features of IMIS as a means of controlling access to the system and safeguarding the integrity of data.

14. A number of governance issues had been identified that still needed to be addressed. OIOS attached a high priority to its recommendations for the full implementation of the governance framework proposed in 1999 by the working group on IMIS of the Task Force on Common Services, the updating of the IMIS common services agreement, and the development of an IMIS strategic plan. A great deal of work remained to be done to consolidate IMIS data and fully integrate the System across all duty stations. OIOS strongly recommended that adequate resources should be made available to achieve such integration and urged the IMIS Steering Committee to finalize its evaluation of the viability of implementing the system in peacekeeping missions and the tribunals.

15. The report highlighted the need to address the question of the funding and personnel resources required to make continuing modifications and technological enhancements to IMIS and to deal with outstanding requests for system changes. Since IMIS was now established as a service within the Information Technology Services Division of the Office of Central Support Services, OIOS was recommending that its funding should be incorporated within the programme budgets of the principal "owners" of the system.

16. Other concerns of OIOS related to the inadequacy of existing audit trails and the ineffectiveness of security reports. OIOS wished to reiterate its earlier recommendation for an information systems risk analysis to be undertaken and an information systems security policy implemented. Given the Organization's increased dependence on the availability of IMIS, the Information Technology Services Division should take the lead in developing a business continuity plan that would ensure the continued delivery of core services in the event of a disaster.

17. The Organization had made a significant investment to develop and implement IMIS and the recommendations contained in the report of OIOS were aimed at maximizing the benefits from that investment. He was pleased to note that the Department of Management had accepted all of the report's recommendations as well as others of a more technical nature that were included in a separate report to management and that implementation of some of the recommendations had already begun.

18. **Ms. Wang** Xinxia, commenting on the reports that had just been introduced by the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, expressed concern at the length of time that it had taken to fill regular vacancies in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations during 2001. She hoped that the new "Galaxy" system would enable the Department to reduce those delays. In order to have a fair and transparent system of staff selection that would take account of geographic distribution and gender balance, the criteria for evaluating candidates must be based on a numeric scoring method. Special attention should also be given to troop-contributing countries and countries whose nationals were underrepresented or unrepresented in the Organization.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.

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Summary record of the 4th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 1 October 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Sharma ..... (Nepal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 122: Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (*continued*)

Other matters

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02-61331 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 122: Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (*continued*) (A/56/817, A/56/879 and A/56/930; A/57/224)

1. **Mr. Christiansen** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, and, in addition, Iceland and Norway, said that the European Union was ready to discuss the large number of recommendations contained in the reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). To the extent possible, however, the number of recommendations should be reduced. The audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting staff for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (A/57/224) indicated that the principle of geographical distribution of candidates selected for appointment to posts approved by the General Assembly on an emergency basis had been broadly respected, although the European Union agreed with the observation of OIOS that there was room for further improvement. The Union also noted with satisfaction the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to address the issue of gender balance and the related recommendations of OIOS.

2. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) asked why the report of OIOS on its audit of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), contained in document A/56/907, had not been introduced and when it was proposed to introduce it. His delegation attached great importance to the work of oversight bodies such as OIOS. He had a number of specific questions concerning the reports already introduced.

3. He was surprised, firstly, at the inclusion in the report on the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting staff for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (A/57/224) of a recommendation that the Office of Human Resources Management should monitor the recruitment process for each vacancy. Such monitoring should be an integral part of the normal activities of the Office and not the subject of a specific recommendation.

4. With regard to the report on the post-implementation review of the Integrated Management Information System at United Nations Headquarters (A/56/879), he would welcome an update on the status of implementation of recommendations 5, 6, 7, 11 and 15. In addition, with respect to recommendation 6, he would welcome clarification of why a request had been made to the General Assembly for extrabudgetary funding for the study of the further consolidation of databases.

5. His delegation noted with satisfaction the generally favourable review of the performance of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and, in particular, the Commission's willingness to implement the recommendations of OIOS. Despite its excellent performance, however, further improvement was still possible. With reference to paragraphs 44 and 45 of the relevant report (A/56/930), for example, he wondered why the Commission would retain on its payroll senior managers who lacked the requisite leadership skills. He would welcome information on the action that had been taken with respect to the managers in question. He also sought an explanation of why different interpretations of recosting methodology had reduced the amount of compensation that had been earmarked for temporary assistance, technical assistance and consultants.

6. Lastly, with reference to the report on the inspection of programme management and administrative practices in the Department for Disarmament Affairs (A/56/817), his delegation was of the view that recommendations should be fewer in number and should focus on the most critical issues, leaving managers to focus on matters that fell within the scope of their normal responsibilities.

7. **Mr. Niiya** (Japan), referring to the report of OIOS on the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting staff for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (A/57/224), said that his delegation acknowledged the recent efforts made by the Secretariat to shorten the overall recruitment time frame. It was concerned, however, that the recruitment time frame for regular posts in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in 2001 had been longer than that for regular posts in the Secretariat in 1999. Clearly, the goal of filling vacancies within a maximum period of 120 days would not be achieved without continuous effort and attention on the part of both the

Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

8. His delegation was also concerned about the inconsistencies in the qualifications and experience specified in the vacancy announcements for posts in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Vacancy announcements should be based on generic job profiles, so as to promote transparency, attract a larger number of candidates and foster mobility among staff, and the Office of Human Resources Management should ensure consistency between generic job profiles and vacancy announcements.

9. He recalled that, in paragraph 12 of resolution 56/241, the General Assembly expressed concern over the imbalance in the geographical representation of Member States in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and urged the Secretary-General to take immediate measures to improve the representation of underrepresented and unrepresented Member States in future recruitment. He endorsed, in that connection, the recommendation of OIOS (A/57/224, recommendation 4) that the Department should review the current composition of its staff in terms of geographical distribution and take appropriate steps with a view to further improving the situation during the next phase of recruitment for the additional posts approved by the General Assembly in resolution 56/241. The report before the Committee covered recruitment activities in DPKO in 2001. However, in the light of the substantial number of additional posts established by the Assembly, his delegation wished to propose that OIOS should conduct a further audit of recruitment activities in DPKO in 2002.

10. **Mr. Obame** (Gabon) welcomed the overall positive assessment of the programme management and administrative practices of the Department for Disarmament Affairs and supported the recommendation that a proactive stance should be taken in mainstreaming disarmament in other substantive areas throughout the Organization. It also supported the recommendations aimed at ensuring the long-term viability and effectiveness of the regional centres. He noted that, despite its limited resources, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament, at Lomé, had organized and funded a conference on confidence-building measures, security and development within the framework of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and had contributed to the establishment of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX). It also published the results of its investigations aimed at unearthing and destroying arms caches as well as the results of its studies on peace and disarmament. For all those reasons, the Centre should be given adequate financial and material resources to enable it to carry out the activities and mandate for which it had been established.

11. **Mr. Pulido León** (Venezuela), with reference to the query by the representative of the United States of America as to why the report of OIOS on the audit of INSTRAW had not been introduced, recalled that, in resolution 56/125, the General Assembly had decided to establish a working group to make recommendations to the Assembly on the future operation of the Institute. The working group's recommendations had been transmitted to the Secretariat but had still not been published in the six official languages. Accordingly, the Group of 77 and China had requested that the Fifth Committee should not take up the report until it had been issued in all official languages and examined by the Third Committee.

12. **Ms. Thomas** (Jamaica), referring to the report of OIOS on its inspection of programme management and administrative practices in ECLAC (A/56/930), said that the restructuring exercise at ECLAC had further enhanced the Commission's image as a source of innovative research on economic and social issues for the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. Her delegation was gratified to note the report's conclusion that ECLAC maintained its historic standing of intellectual excellence, pertinent policy advice and effective technical assistance. It would have been preferable, however, for the report to include an update on the status of implementation of the recommendations relating to the subregional office in Port of Spain so as to give a more balanced picture.

13. Caribbean States could all attest to the invaluable technical assistance given by the subregional office in Port of Spain in the implementation of the mandates of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC). Caribbean States also benefited from the numerous reports prepared by the office on economic and social development issues. The office emphasized harmonization of the economic, social and environmental dimensions in order to achieve sustainable development and had provided valuable advice to Caribbean States during their preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In

light of the forthcoming review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), in 2004, the continued assistance of the subregional office, which served as secretariat for the Programme of Action, was vital.

14. Lastly, the sharing of information and coordination between the various subregional offices of ECLAC was of critical importance to the region as a whole and a further step towards promoting synergies between the Caribbean and Latin American regions. Her delegation looked forward to further progress in that area.

15. **Mr. Wins** (Uruguay) said that the report of OIOS on the inspection of programme management and administrative practices in ECLAC (A/56/930) both confirmed the Commission's historic standing of intellectual excellence and pertinent policy advice to the countries of the region and underscored the difficulties it faced in carrying out its activities. It would be difficult to implement the recommendation that various activities should be financed from extrabudgetary resources, particularly if the countries of the region, which were currently facing one the most severe financial crises in their history, were expected to contribute to their funding. While ECLAC had succeeded in doing more with less, the increase in postponements from 1.8 to 3.2 per cent of total mandated outputs gave cause for concern.

16. In the area of human resources management, OIOS had identified shortcomings in staff-management relations in ECLAC. The Commission should fully implement the recommendations that had been made to address those shortcomings. The large number of posts that had remained vacant for long periods of time was also a cause of concern and the administration at ECLAC should take decisive action to fill all vacancies expeditiously.

17. Turning to the report of OIOS on the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting staff for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (A/57/224), he said that Uruguay, as an important troop contributor, was committed to fulfilling the requirements for participation in peacekeeping operations. It was therefore concerned at the lack of progress towards shortening the recruitment time frame and at the inadequacy of the mechanism used for the evaluation of candidates. In general, his delegation endorsed the recommendations of OIOS in that regard and agreed that the Office of Human Resources Management should effectively monitor the recruitment process for each vacancy with a view to ensuring that the recruitment time frames envisaged in the Secretary-General's report on human resources management reform were achieved.

18. **Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic), referring to the presentation of the reports before the Committee, asked why OIOS had not complied with paragraph 12 of resolution 53/208 B and paragraph 6 of section III of resolution 56/242, in which the General Assembly reiterated that all documents submitted to legislative organs by the Secretariat and expert bodies for consideration and action should have conclusions and recommendations in bold print. He pointed out that in paragraph 7 of section III of the latter resolution, OIOS was specifically requested to submit its reports in accordance with the aforementioned provisions.

19. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services) expressed satisfaction that those members who had spoken under the item believed that OIOS was on the right track. With regard to the reports before the Committee, he said that OIOS always sought to emphasize a limited number of recommendations to enable management to focus on those that it regarded as critical.

20. He agreed that monitoring the recruitment process was a natural management function and that the recommendation made to the Office of Human Resources Management in that regard in document A/57/224 was somewhat redundant. He noted, however, that individual departments also had a role to play. In that connection, he was pleased to report that compliance with recruitment time frames was one of a set of management indicators introduced by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In addition, under an initiative developed by the Department of Management, all heads of department would soon be able to monitor the time taken to fill vacancies using a computerized system.

21. OIOS would monitor the implementation of the recommendations made in document A/57/224. However, the possibility of conducting a further audit of recruitment activities in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would have to be considered in the context of the Office's work plan. The earliest time at which such an audit could be undertaken would

be 2004, and it would be the Department's performance in 2003 that came under scrutiny.

22. Regarding the implementation of recommendations 5, 6, 7, 11 and 15 in document A/56/879, he said that, as of August 2002, the substantive interest groups had yet to prepare a schedule of regular meetings. The study on the issues surrounding further consolidation of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) databases would begin later in the year. It had been decided that implementation of IMIS should take place first in the peacekeeping missions, so that any problems that arose could be ironed out prior to the system's implementation in the Tribunals. The issue of the implementation of the long-term maintenance plan had yet to be referred to the Steering Committee. As to the business continuity plan, although work on it had not yet been completed, the Information Technology Services Division had indicated that additional resources would be required in order to cover all the scenarios envisaged.

23. Concerning the situation outlined in paragraphs 44 and 45 of document A/56/930, he said that the contract of one of the ECLAC officials concerned had not been extended, while the other official was about to retire. Regrettably, OIOS had seen a number of cases, not only in ECLAC, in which managers, despite having excellent substantive skills, failed to provide adequate leadership and oversight. The shortfall in the budgetary resources provided to ECLAC had occurred because of the effects of inflation and fluctuations in the exchange rate of the Chilean peso. However, the problem had now been resolved. OIOS always sought to take into account in its reports the information provided by departments on the status of implementation of its recommendations. However, it also had to issue the reports as expeditiously as possible, and the data from the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean in Port-of-Spain had been submitted too late for inclusion in document A/56/930. OIOS would, of course, continue to track the follow-up of the recommendations by the Port-of-Spain office and would keep the Committee abreast of the progress made.

24. Lastly, he said that only where a report contained recommendations directed at an intergovernmental body would the recommendations appear in bold print. The recommendations in the reports before the Committee were directed at management.

Other matters

25. **Mr. Bouheddou** (Algeria) said that, in paragraph 103 of resolution 56/253, which had been adopted by the General Assembly on the report of the Fifth Committee, the Secretary-General was requested to make proposals to strengthen the Terrorism Prevention Branch at the United Nations Office at Vienna. To his delegation's great surprise, the report in question (A/57/152) had been submitted to the Third Committee, whereas it should have been submitted to the Fifth Committee for consideration under agenda item 112, "Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003". The submission to the Third Committee of a report requested by the Fifth Committee on the basis of a unilateral decision by the Secretariat not only constituted a violation of the rules of procedure, but also risked creating a dangerous precedent. In the same resolution, the Secretary-General was requested to submit proposals on strengthening the Department of Public Information. That report, however, had been submitted to the Fifth Committee. The selectivity demonstrated by the Secretariat in its handling of the two reports raised questions as to the real motives for its actions. If the report contained in document A/57/152 raised concerns for certain delegations, they should express those concerns during the Committee's deliberations rather than resort to procedural manoeuvres to try to avoid discussion of the substantive issues. He requested an explanation from the Secretariat and asked that the report should be submitted to the Fifth Committee for consideration at the current session.

26. **Mr. Acakpo-Satchivi** (Secretary of the Committee) said that he would inform the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division of the concerns just expressed and request him to explain to the Committee the reasons for the report's issuance under agenda item 102, "Crime prevention and criminal justice".

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.

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Summary record of the 5th meeting
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Chairman: Mr. Sharma ..... (Nepal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 119: Joint Inspection Unit

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02-61657 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

Agenda item 119: Joint Inspection Unit (A/57/34, A/57/58 and Add.1, A/57/61, A/57/321, A/57/327 and A/57/434)

1. **Mr. Kuyama** (Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)) introduced the programme of work of JIU for 2002 (A/57/61), the preliminary listing of potential reports for the programme of work of JIU for 2003 and beyond (A/57/321), the annual report of JIU (A/57/34) and the report of JIU entitled "Enhancing governance oversight role: structure, working methods and practices on handling oversight reports" (A/57/58).

2. The Unit expected to have completed by the end of 2002 approximately 18 reports, including the 9 reports already completed, plus 3 notes. Of those 21 outputs, about two thirds had system-wide coverage. In the light of that heavy workload, the programme of work of the Unit for 2002 (A/57/61) contained only five new reports and one new note.

3. The preliminary listing of potential reports for the programme of work of the Unit for 2003 and beyond (A/57/321) had been prepared in conformity with paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 56/245, whereby JIU was invited to improve the presentation of the listing of potential reports for the following year and beyond by providing information on such points as the source, objectives and problems to be addressed and to present such information before the final quarter of each year. The listing was subject to change. The duration of the preparation of each potential report might vary from 6 to 12 months, depending on its scope and complexity. If included in the programme of work of the Unit for 2003, reports would, in principle, be initiated during the course of 2003 and be presented to the Assembly at its fifty-eighth or fifty-ninth sessions.

4. The annual report of JIU (A/57/34) had been prepared in accordance with paragraphs 7, 12 and 14 of resolution 56/245. In paragraph 7 of the resolution, the Unit was requested to consider including in its reports, where possible, the comments of the participating organizations on its findings and recommendations and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. That request had provided JIU with a good opportunity for a review of the current practice with respect to the comments of the participating organizations and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). The delay in receiving the comments of CEB had been a major factor in preventing the timely consideration of JIU reports by the legislative organs. However, were the Unit to engage in a constructive exchange of views with participating organizations during the preparation process of its reports, CEB comments could be considered not to be absolutely necessary, based on article 11.4 (e) of the statute of the Unit. JIU had already prepared several reports using the approach just outlined. He was pleased to note that, in the case of the report on support costs related to extrabudgetary activities in organizations of the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2002/3), the experience had been a positive one. The Unit had been able to include in the final version of the report most of the comments made by participating organizations; reservations and dissenting views had been recorded in the annex to the report for the benefit of Member States. The report had generally been well received by the secretariats of the participating organizations. The General Assembly might therefore wish to accept, on a trial basis, the proposed new procedure, without prejudice to the provisions of article 11.4 of the statute of the Unit.

5. In paragraph 14 of resolution 56/245, the Unit was requested to submit, as part of its annual report, additional comments and recommendations on its experience with the system of follow-up to its reports. During the reporting period, JIU had continued its efforts to improve interaction with its participating organizations. It had concluded successful discussions with the secretariats of the Universal Postal Union, the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the subsequent endorsement of the respective legislative organs, on the modalities for the implementation of the JIU follow-up system. It had reached a basic understanding with the secretariats of three additional organizations during the same period and was in the process of completing a similar exercise with five more. The aim of those agreements was to increase the impact of the Unit's reports by enhancing the ability of the legislative organs to take specific action on the recommendations contained therein and the capacity of the secretariats to implement them. While some progress had been made in the participating organizations with which follow-up procedures had been agreed, additional effort would be

required in order to ensure that the procedures were fully implemented.

6. In paragraph 12 of resolution 56/245, the General Assembly welcomed the initial steps taken by JIU to intensify relations with other oversight bodies and requested the Unit to report to it thereon at its fifty-seventh session. In paragraph 15 of the resolution, the Assembly also decided to review the current state of coordination among the United Nations oversight bodies. In that connection, he was pleased to report that the Unit had organized a joint meeting with the Panel of External Auditors of the United Nations, taking advantage of their meeting held in Geneva in November 2001. At the meeting, JIU had submitted a proposal for the development of systematic cooperation and coordination among oversight bodies. In addition, the Unit had submitted two papers to the fifth tripartite oversight coordination meeting (with the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the Board of Auditors) held in July 2002. It had also long been a practice of JIU to consult with the Office of Internal Oversight Services, and the two oversight bodies exchanged information on their respective programmes of work.

7. Turning to the report of JIU entitled "Enhancing governance oversight role: structure, working methods and practices on handling oversight reports" (A/57/58), he said that there was a growing interest on the part of the Member States in improving the governance of the organizations of the United Nations system. Governance of those organizations by the legislative organs was assured mainly through setting policies, programme objectives and strategies. Inseparably related to the governance function was the oversight responsibility of the legislative organs, which was a key aspect in ensuring that the human, financial and other resources made available were efficiently and effectively utilized, in the management by the secretariats, to achieve the policy directives and missions established for the organizations. The objective of the Unit's report was to contribute to enhancing the effectiveness and quality of the oversight role exercised by the legislative organs. To that end, it focused on the governance structure, working methods and practices of the legislative organs concerning oversight and on their procedures for handling reports prepared by oversight bodies. The report was especially timely: a number of the issues raised in the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387) were directly related to those covered in the JIU report. For example, the Secretary-General observed, in paragraph 164 of his report, that the existing systems for reporting and evaluating the performance of programmes had no practical impact on future plans and resource allocation decisions; that situation had constituted the rationale for a number of the recommendations made in the JIU report.

8. The members of CEB had appreciated the JIU report's analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the oversight activities of legislative organs. However, while the Unit's recommendations had been accepted in principle, some had met with mixed reactions. In his view, certain comments made by the secretariats of participating organizations were simply a defence of the status quo. He noted, in that connection, that most of the recommendations had been endorsed by those legislative organs which had considered them.

9. With the exception of recommendation 4, the Unit's recommendations were addressed to the legislative organs, rather than the Executive Heads. Recommendation 1 presented a modus operandi for enhancing the effectiveness of the oversight functions exercised by the legislative organs. The practice of the Fifth Committee already met the criteria set out in paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) of the recommendation, but the situation with respect to the other Main Committees was far from satisfactory. Paragraph (e) concerned secretariat compliance with approved oversight recommendations. In general, the prevailing situation was not satisfactory, although the practice of such organizations as the United Nations Children's Fund, which had submitted a report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, was relatively good.

10. In recommendation 2, it was suggested that legislative organs might wish to adopt measures to rationalize or strengthen governance structures. He noted that, in some specialized agencies, Member States lacked expert advice on administrative and budgetary issues. It was therefore suggested, in paragraph (d), that legislative organs could be assisted by small expert advisory bodies.

11. In recommendation 3, legislative organs were encouraged, in the interests of efficiency, effectiveness

and economy in governance oversight, to review certain questionable practices, including the payment of travel and subsistence allowance to delegates. As demonstrated in table 2 of the annex to the report, governance costs in such organizations as UNESCO and the International Labour Organization were not negligible.

12. In the case of the United Nations Secretariat, recommendation 4 could be expanded to include consolidated reporting by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of all oversight bodies. He noted, in that connection, that consolidating reports on similar subjects was one of the measures proposed by the Secretary-General in his report on strengthening of the United Nations (A/57/387). Some organizations were already moving in that direction. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization, for example, had recently established a tracking system to follow up all recommendations made by internal and external oversight bodies. JIU believed that consolidated reporting would facilitate the identification of areas in which major management weaknesses existed, as well as highlight the efforts of secretariats to remedy those shortcomings. It would, in addition, encourage secretariats to address oversight recommendations from a systemic perspective; that had been one of the objectives of the Secretary-General in establishing the Accountability Panel. One of the two papers submitted by JIU to the fifth tripartite oversight coordination meeting was entitled "Consolidated reporting by the Secretary-General on the implementation of all oversight recommendations". The participants in that meeting had agreed to submit a specific proposal on the matter to the Secretary-General in due course.

13. **Mr. Sevilla** (Secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination CEB)), introducing the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the comments of CEB on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Enhancing governance oversight role: structure, working methods and practices on handling oversight reports" (A/57/58/Add.1), said that comments on the report from the members of CEB had clearly shown that they considered the oversight functions of legislative bodies within the organizations of the United Nations system to be an important issue. Those organizations had differing oversight procedures, practices and costs and the members of CEB had therefore particularly appreciated the analytical content of the report, which adopted a system-wide perspective, encouraged a review of existing arrangements and policies, and emphasized the linkage between legislative oversight, on the one hand, and policy formulation, programme planning, budgeting and improvement of management and accountability, on the other. The members of CEB had, however, expressed doubts about a number of the recommendations.

14. They had not objected in principle to recommendation 1, which proposed linking the review of oversight reports with programming, policy setting and administrative, budgetary and financial matters, but they had pointed out that existing mechanisms were already being used, or would be used, to achieve that end. They had been concerned that the modus operandi suggested in recommendation 1 (a), namely that the review of oversight reports should be linked to substantive items on the agendas of the legislative organs, might conflict with those organs' established practices, involve them in too much detail, take too much time for discussion, and require a single oversight issue to be taken up under various agenda items, which would be impractical.

15. Most organizations had taken exception to the suggestion in recommendation 2 that, in applying the modus operandi proposed in recommendation 1, efforts should be made to consolidate, convert or streamline existing governance structures in order to rationalize or strengthen them. They considered that the composition, authority and terms of reference of their governance structures were adequate.

16. The members of CEB had not supported recommendation 3 (a), which proposed a review of the numerical composition of the "executive" legislative organs and/or their subsidiary committees. They had argued that the membership and composition of existing oversight structures were adequate, appropriate and effective, or that altering the composition of those legislative organs would be constitutionally difficult and very sensitive. At least one organization had suggested that consensus building should instead be pursued through more informal interaction with member States prior to meetings of the legislative organs.

17. The members of CEB had also not supported recommendation 3 (b), which proposed a review of the expertise and experience to be required of members of

the "executive" legislative organs and/or their subsidiary committees, on the grounds that existing rules and decisions relating to membership of those legislative organs already required appropriate expertise and/or experience. They had pointed out that it was the prerogative of member States to determine the composition of their delegations to legislative organs.

18. The members of CEB had felt that recommendation 3 (c), which proposed a review of the frequency and duration of the sessions of legislative bodies, was unnecessary, as many organizations had already taken action on that matter in consultation with their member States. They had, moreover, not considered recommendation 3 (d), which proposed a review of the travel and subsistence allowance paid to delegates, because there were a number of existing rules on the matter.

19. Recommendation 4, which called for summaries of relevant oversight report recommendations and follow-up action to be included in individual sections of the programme budget, had drawn broad support. Several organizations had pointed out that their own procedures for handling oversight reports already implemented the recommendation in various ways. At least one organization had objected to the recommendation on the grounds that implementing it would add to the time needed to prepare and discuss budget matters.

20. As their comments had shown, the members of CEB had welcomed the inspector's careful consideration of the legislative oversight structure, working methods and practices, and the information collected in the report, which brought out the strengths and weaknesses of the current arrangements. They were already taking action to improve the oversight functions of their legislative organs, but believed that the JIU recommendations were not sufficiently comprehensive or responsive to the requirements of their organizations for system-wide implementation.

21. **Ms. Ferrera-Mahmud** (Oversight Support Unit, Department of Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/57/327), said that the report, which was submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2924 B (XXVII) and General Assembly resolution 44/184 included detailed information on four JIU reports.

22. The JIU report entitled "Coordination at Headquarters and at the field level between United Nations agencies involved in peace-building: an assessment of possibilities" (A/52/430) and the related comments of the Secretary-General and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) (A/52/430 and Add.1) had been considered under several thematic debates on the topic in the Security Council. A framework for a comprehensive and integrated strategy in peace-building had then been developed and the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs had been given the role of focal point for peace-building matters.

23. The JIU report entitled "Fellowships in the United Nations system" (A/53/154), together with the comments of the Secretary-General and ACC, had been considered by various legislative bodies in the United Nations system, including the Second Committee of the General Assembly during the fifty-third session. The objective of the report was to identify major management and coordination issues relating to the implementation of the United Nations system fellowship programmes, and their contribution to capacity-building. The inspectors had concluded that the organizations of the United Nations system should adopt a uniform reporting format based on a common definition of fellowships, focusing on quality, relevance and impact, and it had called for measures to foster the use of former fellows' expertise.

24. The JIU report entitled "The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)" (A/53/788), together with the comments of ACC (A/53/788/Add.1) had been submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session and had also been considered by various legislative bodies in the United Nations system, including the Executive Board of UNESCO which had welcomed the sharing of UNOPS expertise and experience in the area of procurement in general and, in particular, in its practice and procedure in emergency situations.

25. The JIU report entitled "More coherence for enhanced oversight in the United Nations system" (A/53/171) provided a comparative assessment of oversight mechanisms used within the United Nations system. The report had been introduced in the Fifth Committee and had then been considered by the

Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), which had expressed appreciation for the analysis and reference information, considering it readable, informative and timely. However, only recommendations 5 and 6 had been supported without reservation.

26. The Secretariat continued to attach a high priority to the timely and comprehensive implementation of JIU recommendations approved by the General Assembly, and was working with JIU to develop new and improved methods of reporting on their implementation.

27. **Ms. Nakian** (United States of America) reiterated the importance her delegation attached to effective oversight mechanisms in the United Nations system. Those mechanisms had produced many measures to improve efficiency, effectiveness and productivity, but much remained to be done. A combined effort was needed with direction from Executive Heads and the participation of legislative organs and Member States. It was not enough to identify areas for improvement: recommendations had to be targeted, realistic and implemented in a timely manner. To that end, oversight reports needed to be geared to the genuine needs of the participating organizations, and that was an area in which her delegation believed that JIU could improve its approach. Many JIU reports and recommendations were too broad and lacked proposals for action, or repeated conclusions already drawn in other reports. Many JIU recommendations came too late and were already being implemented by the time they were made. External and internal oversight bodies accordingly needed to avoid duplication by coordinating and sharing data.

28. Her delegation hoped that future JIU reports would be less academic and more focused on action to improve productivity and efficiency. Some of the potential reports listed in the work programme of JIU for 2003 were worth pursuing, but others were too broad, and beyond the resources and capabilities of the Unit. It would be useful to study United Nations mandates to evaluate relevance and effectiveness, and to assess how well the United Nations implemented the existing Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

29. Her delegation had been dismayed to learn that the rate of success in implementing oversight recommendations, particularly those of JIU, was limited. That had been due in part to the broad nature of many JIU recommendations, but also in part to the failure of some legislative bodies, including the Fifth Committee, to fulfil follow-up expectations. The General Assembly had taken specific action on eight JIU reports, but other legislative bodies had not even considered many JIU reports. Steps should be taken to ensure that reports were submitted to the legislative bodies of participating organizations for consideration. Certain legislative bodies also needed to improve oversight structures and practices; because of their specialized and technical nature, some organizations had tended to set aside oversight issues.

30. She welcomed the efforts made by JIU to find ways to track the implementation of recommendations and to help to ensure that oversight activities eventually led to improved policies, programmes and management processes. Currently, many findings and recommendations were not linked to policy, programme planning, budgeting, management improvement and accountability.

31. In resolution 52/220 the General Assembly requested that the individual sections of the programme budget contain a summary of the relevant recommendations of the internal and external oversight bodies and information on the follow-up action taken for each recommendation. Although her delegation was pleased to note that the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 contained such information, it was dismayed that many other participating organizations had found that request inappropriate or unworkable.

32. More information on productivity and efficiency efforts would be welcome. The scaled-down work programme of JIU for 2002 should be reflected in more targeted, detailed and action-oriented reports, that avoided redundancy with other oversight bodies. Her delegation looked forward to receiving information on the progress of the work programme.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.